

Columbia University
in the City of New York

LIBRARY



THE SELIGMAN LIBRARY OF ECONOMICS

PURCHASED BY THE UNIVERSITY

1929

AE2
1889

POSTSCRIPT.—Aug. 22, 1889, P.M.—Information received to-day gives good promise of what the League will do at Paris, and so, to some extent, removes the occasion for a part of what is contained in these pages.

A CONFIDENTIAL LETTER

ON THE

PROCEDURE OF THE FRIENDS
OF SILVER,

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO

THE DEPUTATION OF MAY 30TH,
THE REPLY OF LORD SALISBURY, AND
THE CONGRÈS MONÉTAIRE DE
L'EXPOSITION AT PARIS (SEPT. 11-14), 1889.

S. Dana (Sturton)

Privately Printed.

LONDON.

August, 1889.

CONTENTS.

	Page.
The Deputation of May 30th, 1889 - - - - -	4
The Demand analysed - - - - -	4
What is the next step in International Procedure - - - - -	5
What kind of an Assembly do you want - - - - -	6
Opinion about an Assembly for Speech-making - - - - -	7
State-Papers bearing on the Question - - - - -	8
Declaration of the Delegates of France and the United States (July 1881) - - - - -	8
Resolution of Adjournment of the Conference of 1881 - - - - -	9
Copy of an Identical Note sent to the Various Powers by the Governments of France and of the United States, March 31, 1882 - - - - -	10
Comparison with the Procedure suggested on May 30th - - - - -	11
The Policy to be pursued - - - - -	11
The Part that Feeling plays in carrying Reforms and the need of simplifying and clarifying Popular Issues - - - - -	12
The Attitude of the United Kingdom before the Monetary Conferences of 1878 and 1881 - - - - -	14
The Present Status of Silver under the Laws of the United Kingdom - - - - -	16
Supposed case of a Ministry friendly to your Cause - - - - -	18
Complexity of Procedure in reference to a Coinage Union - - - - -	19
What is it you Want - - - - -	19
What is to be done at Westminster - - - - -	20
What was asked of the Ministry - - - - -	20
What could a friendly Ministry do - - - - -	21
What Ministries have done - - - - -	22
What a Ministry might do - - - - -	23
What you really want of the Ministry - - - - -	25
The Reply of the Ministers to your Deputation - - - - -	26
The reference to Foreign Countries - - - - -	27
The Silver Re-union at the French Exhibition - - - - -	28
The dignity of your Position and the need of revealing it - - - - -	29
The Character of your Opponents as mere Dis-unionists - - - - -	30
The propriety of a certain Aggressiveness - - - - -	31
The Representation of the League at the coming Congress of the Exposition. (Sept. 11-14) - - - - -	32
What is wanted then from the League - - - - -	32

Seligman
1889E
H789

MY DEAR———

YOU desire me to make suggestions that occur to me touching the procedure of the friends of silver in England. You say that the cause in England is now at last well on the way from the heights of speculation and the clouds of statistics down to the lowlands of "practical politics," and that, as I have held a labouring oar in places where silver was practical politics, there may be something I can point out which others would not observe. It is plain to me that there is a peculiar reason just now for turning on all the available light upon the questions of procedure, both in England and outside of it, because of the coming "Monetary Congress" at Paris, whereby a novel international procedure in Paris is intertwined inseparably with practical politics in England. It seems to follow from this fact that what you do to-day, in these vacation weeks of August and September, will have a very important bearing on the future of your cause. It therefore occurs to me that if I have anything to say the sooner I say it the better.

I accept the task. If anyone should come to read these lines who thinks anything they contain intrusive, I hereby call him and you to witness it is you rather than I who have called them forth, and that I have no time to mince matters.

I think I shall put this letter into type, not of course for the public—for this letter is distinctly *not* to be public—nor merely for clearness and ease of reading, but because I want to keep copies as well as give several to our friends, and type is the simplest means of multiplying copies, especially when you consider that it does not require the manual labour of presentable manuscript to start with; while in any case it offers, with the help of dictation, the

quickest way from one mind to another, and time is very short.

THE DEPUTATION OF MAY 30th, 1889.

The vanguard of your army, so to speak, entered the lists of practical politics on May 30 last. I refer to the great deputation which on that day waited upon the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to present your case, and which elicited a pronouncement from the Ministry.

Is there any objection to my making what was then said a text for what I have to say in these pages? I hope not. By doing this I shall put my notions under the clearest light of comparison with what is in all probability going on in other minds at this time. Beside this, any scheme or suggestion of tactics must bear reference to the actual situation of your forces as it now is.

My quotations will be taken from the report published in pamphlet form by the League.

The object of the deputation is stated on pages 3 and 22 to be as follows:—

To urge upon Her Majesty's Government the importance of consulting the Chief Commercial Nations as to their readiness to join with the United Kingdom in a Conference for the purpose of considering whether, and how far, a bimetallic system can be re-established by international agreement.

THE DEMAND ANALYSED.

1. The Government of the United Kingdom is to ask other Governments whether they are ready to come to a Conference.

Is the Government of the United Kingdom to invite other Governments to a Conference?

Or is it to ask other Governments whether they would send delegates if they were so invited?

This is a very serious question. It is all the more serious because of the difficulty, in asking it, of warding off a temptation to smile.

I once knew of a distinguished but eccentric man who asked a youth whether he would not *like* to come and dine with him? and the query was not an invitation; it merely gratified curiosity. The case may not be exactly parallel, but the idea suggests itself. The question is germane whether it would not be rather embarrassing for one Government to frame a request addressed to foreign Governments of exactly the effect which the statement above quoted seems to call for. From these remarks we are enabled easily to educe the kernel of the business; namely:—

What could Her Majesty's Government do, what could they offer as their quota of action?

2. The expected Conference to be called by Her Majesty's Government is to consider—

1. "*Whether* a bimetallic system can be established by international agreement," and
2. "*How far* a bimetallic system can be established by international agreement."

Now to both these questions there is a double sense.

There is the question of opinion, the academic or platonic sense, and

There is the question of action, of will, the practical sense.

I doubt not there may be reason for not indicating the precise object in this case, but you will agree with me that it is well that those who have to formulate the demand should understand among themselves which sense is intended, or whether both are intended.

WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP IN INTERNATIONAL PROCEDURE?

Do you desire a business meeting of delegates empowered to represent a policy, at least in some measure

fixed and determined upon by the Governments they represent, or do you desire an academic assembly for purposes of disquisition (and of course comparison of view) upon the various political and economic questions involved? One or the other must be the case. Whatever may have been politic in one instance or in another, the omission to say or to decide which alternative is desired, can hardly be continued very long with profit.

WHAT KIND OF AN ASSEMBLY DO YOU WANT?

Indeed I shall be excused for saying very frankly that there is a peculiar need, a pressing demand, for clearness in this matter. It seems to me that the people whom you wish to rally to your side are people who want acts not words, who prefer action to talk, and who clearly understand the difference between them. So if you want a Conference that means business the question arises whether it is not your interest to say so. There are many people who are weary of, and people who have long been wont to satirise, the pointless spouting of currency doctors. Your adversaries know this, and they ask nothing better than to turn the advocates of this reform into a lecture-room, there to debate upon the insolubles of money. Among the bystanders whom you wish to recruit for the cause, but who are not yet proficient in monetary matters, the feeling I speak of is a drag upon your cause. If you mean a business meeting, therefore, and do not mean an assembly for disquisition, I should say it would be a clear gain for you to say so.

On the other hand, if you have reason for desiring an international assembly for disquisition, it is plainly politic to do what can be done to minimise the discouragement or indifference excited by that prospect, by limiting the field of discussion. It is plain that something would be gained if you could set bounds to the threatened multiplication of Blue-books, by explaining what specific thing you require debate about, and why it is necessary.

OPINION ABOUT AN ASSEMBLY FOR SPEECH-MAKING.

Here I have a word of counsel to give which is not without authority, seeing that the subject-matter is in some measure within my jurisdiction. I assure you the *onus probandi*, as matters now stand, is against you; if you wish an assembly for disquisition you must be prepared to overthrow the existing "presumptions of the case," to use a legal phrase.

This particular subject is one about which the state of opinion in countries outside of England constitutes a main part of the facts upon which a judgment is to be based. That the matter is rather peculiarly within my view will be apparent from the records of the previous International Monetary Conferences of 1878 and of 1881-2. Inasmuch as no one embodies quite as I do a continuity of pressure (both private and, at times, official), in favour of the project of pro-silver federation, and as, in my official relation to the matter, I was the representative of that one of the chief Powers which proposed it to the others, I have necessarily given the question of future international procedure a good deal of thought during a long course of years. To you personally it is needless to mention this; but I state the points frankly and clearly, and shall be excused for doing so, because these lines may possibly come to the minds of others who are not as familiar as you are with the facts.

Now at the time of the Conference of 1881-2 it was agreed on the part of M. Cernuschi, whose private activity is, so to speak, known to all men, and whose relation to the French delegation of 1881 was analogous to mine in the American delegation, that the time for assemblies for disquisition was past. So likewise when M. Léon Say came to power in 1882, and the adjournment of the projected Conference of 1882 was decided upon by the representatives of the Powers who convoked it, his opinion coincided with mine on this point. In fact—after the

Conference of 1881—*What was there to say? What is the object of speech-making? Only to influence England!*

STATE-PAPERS BEARING ON THE QUESTION.

I will set down here the text of the Declaration of the two inviting Powers in 1881, and of the resolution of adjournment of the Conference, and of the "Identical Note" sent to the other Powers in 1882, and accompany them with an averment, to which I invite your attention, that these State-papers may be held to determine in advance the favourable line of international procedure to be followed in any further action that is proposed. Whenever the United Kingdom shall be ready to promote the monetary federation which your League has in view, it will become the business of those in authority to consider closely the diplomatic situation, and thus to take account of the existing attitude of nations touching concurrent measures for the restoration of silver. With a view to this eventuality, I suggest, with whatever force I can command, that the true policy for them is to lose no advantages which that attitude offers, but, on the contrary, to obtain the maximum advantage to be gained from that attitude. A consideration of those obstacles to prompt international action which are embodied in the phrases, the "inertia of nations" and "great bodies move slowly," will further add force to this averment.

DECLARATION OF THE DELEGATES OF FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES (July 1881.)

Mr. EVARTS, on behalf of the Delegates of France (Magnin, Dumas, Denormandie, and Cernuschi), and of the United States of America (Evarts, Thurman, Howe, and Horton), read the following Declaration:—

The Delegates of France and of the United States, in the name of their respective Governments, make the following Declarations:—

1. The depreciation and great fluctuations in the value of silver relatively to gold, which of late years have shown themselves, and

which continue to exist, have been, and are, injurious to commerce and to the general prosperity, and the establishment and maintenance of a fixed relation of value between silver and gold would produce most important benefits to the commerce of the world.

2. A Convention, entered into by an important group of States, by which they should agree to open their mints to free and unlimited coinage of both silver and gold, at a fixed proportion of weight between the gold and silver contained in the monetary unit of each metal, and with full legal tender faculty to the money thus issued, would cause and maintain a stability in the relative value of the two metals suitable to the interests and requirements of the commerce of the world.

3. Any ratio, now or of late in use by any commercial nation, if adopted by such important group of States, could be maintained; but the adoption of the ratio of $15\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 would accomplish the principal object with less disturbance in the monetary systems to be affected by it than by any other ratio.

4. Without considering the effect which might be produced toward the desired object by a lesser combination of States, a convention which would include England, France, Germany, and the United States, with the concurrence of other States, both in Europe and on the American continent, which this combination would assure, would be adequate to produce and maintain throughout the commercial world the relation between the two metals that such convention should adopt.

RESOLUTION OF ADJOURNMENT OF THE CONFERENCE OF 1881.

The following Resolution was adopted at the last Session, July 1881:—

The Conference, considering that in the course of its two sessions it has heard the speeches, declarations, and observations of the Delegates of the States herein-after enumerated;

Germany, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, the United States, France, Great Britain, British India, Canada, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland;

Considering that the declarations made by several of the Delegates have been in the name of their Governments;

That these declarations all admit the expediency of taking various measures in concert, under reservation of the entire freedom of action of the different Governments;

That there is ground for believing that an understanding may be established between the States which have taken part in the Conference;

But that it is expedient to suspend its meetings;

That, in fact, the monetary situation may, as regards some States, call for the intervention of their Governments, and that

there is reason for giving an opportunity at present for diplomatic negotiations ;

Adjourns to Wednesday, 12th April 1882.

COPY OF AN IDENTICAL NOTE SENT TO THE VARIOUS
POWERS BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF FRANCE AND OF
THE UNITED STATES, MARCH 31, 1882.

The following is the English copy of the Identical Note sent by the Governments of France and of the United States to the Governments of the various Powers which had been invited to the Conference :—

Paris, March 31, 1882.

The International Monetary Conference which was convened at Paris last year, upon the invitation of France and of the United States, and in which the Government of _____ was represented, adjourned to meet the 12th of April 1882.

In making this decision at the session of July 8, 1881, the Delegates anticipated that, before the date thus fixed, the Governments represented in the Conference would be able to prepare solutions of the questions involved, with a view to the conclusion of an International Convention, the terms of which should be discussed and determined by the Conference.

This anticipation has been in part realised. From all the information which has been received, it appears that in a large number of States the question has continued to be the subject of earnest consideration, and that various plans have been under discussion, with the object either of re-establishing the free coinage of silver money, or of restoring to the metal silver its proper international value by enlarging its use as coin. Up to the present time, however, these investigations do not appear to have produced conclusions sufficiently positive to serve as a basis for formal deliberations of the Conference.

Hence, in the opinion of the Government of the United States, in conformity with the view entertained by various other Governments, notably by those of Germany, Holland, and Italy, there would be no sufficient advantage in re-opening the discussions of the Conference at present.

In this situation, the Governments of the United States and of France are of the opinion that it would be desirable to defer the convocation of the Conference, subject to a determination, on the part of the States interested, of the date for its re-assembling, the same to take place within the present year.

COMPARISON WITH THE PROCEDURE SUGGESTED ON MAY 30TH.

These state-papers, as you will have observed, contemplate action, decision, the discussion of definite proposals made with the authority of Government, rather than general disquisition. The talking to be done is chiefly to be done privately, in what is regarded as diplomatic negotiation. It would seem that the thing to be done now is to take up the thread that was left lying in 1882. It is with a view to these facts and considerations that I have ventured to suggest that if there is need of an assembly for disquisition, it is desirable that that need should be explained to those who are interested.

Returning now to the statement of the object of the deputation, you will observe that not only does it take no note of these controlling practical considerations to which I have just called your attention, but it is conceived without any explicit reference to anything in the attitude of nations implying an existing committal on the subject.

THE POLICY TO BE PURSUED.

I now pass to the question of the *policy* of treating England's adopting the pro-silver attitude you desire as if it were a measure to be taken by the United Kingdom *pro re natâ*, ignoring what other nations have done before. I shall be watchful to accept correction of my views on this head—upon which you are one of the responsible judges—but I can hardly do justice to the occasion if I fail frankly to set forth my views, and the reasons for them. I shall hope to treat the matter purely as a question of tactics, without deflection from any personal or national feeling.

It appears to me a grave fault of tactics if you should quite let go the advantages given you by the attitude of the United Kingdom before the Conference of 1878, under

Lord Beaconsfield's administration, and before the Conference of 1881 under Mr. Gladstone's. It seems to me your policy should rather be to do all you can, I will not say to quicken the sense of responsibility of Ministry, Parliament, and people to-day, for what was done under the authority of the United Kingdom in those earlier years, but rather, let me say, to make it plain to all who are concerned, how obvious the interest of your country then appeared, and how obstinately, in the years that have passed since then, those who are in power as leaders of opinion have shut their eyes to that interest, and thus neglected to promote the welfare of their people. It seems to me there is material here for a little indignation—not venomous but wholesome—and that if the feeling which is warranted by these facts, the sympathy with your cause which they justify, be aroused, half your battle is won—the battle, I mean, of awakening the *further* interest and support of English public opinion for the reform you advocate, *by using the leverage your advanced position now gives you.*

THE PART THAT FEELING PLAYS IN CARRYING REFORMS AND THE NEED OF SIMPLIFYING AND CLARIFYING POPULAR ISSUES.

I ought perhaps to explain very clearly that these views of mine are an inference or corollary drawn from a general view touching that disposition of public opinion which enables great reform measures to be carried. The measures you wish to see adopted will not be adopted because this man or that is to make money by them. They will be adopted because they are legitimate, because there is a prevailing impression that they are RIGHT. It is with a view to this fact that rules of tactics for your campaign are to be conceived.

Your object is to naturalise among the people the conviction—which is entitled to live in their minds and rule their

conduct—that you are RIGHT. How are you to do this? That is the question! Now what I wish to make clear is, that it is not necessary that persuasion should be an exclusively mental process. Feeling has its force, and to succeed you need to make every legitimate appeal which will produce a disposition favourable to the approach or mastery of the desired convictions. I do not believe you can transform the population of the United Kingdom, or even a large majority of their leaders, into accomplished economists or monetary proficient. I trust it is obvious I say this without disrespect. But I believe you can persuade the various majorities you need that you are RIGHT. For this purpose the instrumentalities of practical persuasiveness need to be added to that apparatus of scientific argument, which, while it convinces a fair and studious mind, does not always attract the unwilling or inspire the thoughtless. And what you wish to do for success in practical politics is to attract these unwilling and unthinking minds as far as you can and as quickly as you can.

For a certain class of them a frank and summary method of presentation, a bird's-eye view, so to speak, of the situation, is peculiarly useful. No doubt you have at some time read Lord Beaconsfield's novels. Do you remember what is said in them of the usefulness of a "cry"?

"The country is nothing," said Mr. Rigby, "it is the constituency you have to deal with."

"And to manage them, you must have a good cry," said Taper. "All now depends on a good cry."

Now there is sagacity as well as cynicism in this. Can you afford to lose any of the good points of your case? I fear not! This is the *end of the thirteenth year of agitation of your cause in England.*

If I am right, you need, upon going into action politically—certainly with a portion of the constituency you appeal to—to do what is done in naval battles, namely, to "clear decks for action," and, in this case, I should say, the thing

to be done was to send all matters of pedantry below, and to use only armament that covers the enemy's range. You will, I think, recognise that the struggle you are engaged in is not like a race, with a fair and even start for both, in which he wins who ought to win. Your position is not so favourable. If it had been, your battle would have been won in 1878. Your position, on the contrary, can better be likened to that of a naval force trying to capture a fortress. What your enemies desire to do is merely to stay where they are. They have the advantage of position and possession. Now, the moral strength, so to speak, of their position and possession, in this case, is pride, pride, pride. They are obstinately in the wrong, and it is pride that keeps them so. My suggestion seems to me to mean hot shot for that citadel.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM BEFORE THE MONETARY CONFERENCES OF 1878 AND 1881.

Accompany me, if you please, in a brief retrospective glance at the attitude assumed on the part of the United Kingdom before the representatives of other nations in the Paris official Conferences of 1878 and 1881.

It was no less a personage than Mr. Goschen—who, though now Chancellor of the Exchequer, cannot to-day with greater authority voice the consensus of English science and sagacity than he commanded in 1878—who as first delegate of the English Commission put the veto of that science and of that sagacity upon the plans then widely entertained among continental monetary statesmen for further measures to outlaw silver.

How does this act comport with the anti-silver doctrine and policy which is still, after 11 years, holding the fort against you? What inference did it logically justify then—11 years ago? It justified the inference that the resumption of silver coinage, the restoration of the *status*

quo ante, which it is the object of your movement to promote, was for England's interest.

Here I do not neglect the reservation then made that England was not prepared to change her local anti-silver laws. That reservation was political as well as economic. It might mean, "I am not in a position to offer
" to change my anti-silver laws, or I am not willing to
" offer so great an amount, so valuable a consideration,
" as a change of my anti-silver laws, in return for the
" benefits to come from the restoration of silver in other
" countries."

These are political grounds.

It might also mean, "I consider my anti-silver laws a
" palladium of monetary safety to me, or I consider that
" other nations in restoring silver are making a dangerous
" experiment."

These (and others that might be stated) are economic grounds.

But these inferences from the reservation thus made, *for England but not for India*, are circumscribed to the personal opinion of the individual, or attitude of the country as represented by him. They do not operate to nullify the logical inferences which extend outside of this circumscription. These in substance and effect supported the thesis which we, who brought the proposal of America to Europe, set forth: "Silver and gold are the money
" metals of man; all nations are interested in the stability
" of money, and hence in parity of moneys; there is
" one way, and one way alone, to maintain the parity
" between the two halves of money, and that way is
" concurrence of nations in giving them legal equality at
" one ratio."

The attitude of England in 1881 was a further advance on the same line.

Can it be that there is nothing in this situation which can be utilised, and assist to clear away for Englishmen

the obscurity and the indifference which obstruct the path of your reform?

It seems to me that it is a good way of drawing the attention of some of your auditors to say that the main point of your contention was admitted years ago, publicly, officially, on the authority of two Ministries; that the "insular, local, anti-imperial, reservations of Bourbon pedantry," &c., have alone prevented the adoption of a reform which was then urged as a defence against coming evils; that year after year the evils have come to justify your protest, and still men have the face to deny their responsibility for them, &c., &c.

All of which you can say better than I!

THE PRESENT STATUS OF SILVER UNDER THE LAWS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM.

A further query has suggested itself to me as to the availability of the present legal status of silver in your popular campaign.

I can conceive that in the minds of some of your champions—whether practiced in the professorial or in the business man's presentation of your case,—my thesis here may arouse the objection that such matters are "ancient history." Is there anything in the objection? I think not. Of course my point here is—cannot the facts be brought to bear upon that citadel of pride which I was just speaking of?

Some of these facts are very well known, but others are known in a circle which is probably very limited. It is a very familiar fact that the law of 1844 left silver bullion on a plane of legal equality with gold (within the limits of 1 to 4 in amount) as deposit for the issue of legal tender notes. It is not so fully known that the so-called "Gold Standard Act" of 1816 left this field open for silver without limit of amount. Nor is it, I suppose, known to more than a few that the Act last named confirmed the immemorial right

of free coinage of silver in England, making it, however, subject to the will of the Crown or of the Ministry, to be evidenced by the issuance of a proclamation. In the Coinage Act of 1870 the law of 1816 was in substance re-enacted, and the intent of Parliament to make no change of the law in substance was plain. It therefore appears, that it is in the power to-day of the Ministry of Lord Salisbury to establish free coinage of silver dollars (double florins).

This latter statement may astonish you. But I think I am right. Of course I cannot surely affirm that my construction of section 11 (10) of the Coinage Act of 1870 would be ratified by all constitutional lawyers. Still the point might be raised, and it would be interesting to hear it argued, and very instructive. For mark you, if I am not right, then free coinage of silver was codified out of existence, either by inadvertence or surreptitiously.

I pursue my question further, assuming that my view is correct. If I am wrong there is no harm done by these lines.

Such dollars would not be statutory legal tender above two pounds. But it is in the power of the Treasury to annul this disadvantage. If these dollars were accepted in the Government offices they would become legal tender by official consent, a status which would closely approach their position if so guaranteed by statute. To do this would, so far as I am informed, be quite legitimate. I am aware of no law which limits the discretion of the Treasury. Indeed it is a matter of common knowledge that this discretion has been expanded so as to produce what operates in practice as an evasion of the statute which ordains the cutting of light gold coin. As I understand, no evasion of law would be needed to enable the Treasury to use silver dollars, and if the Treasury can accept gold coin which is not statutory legal tender it is difficult to see any valid objection to its accepting silver.

Now the point to which I wish to call your attention is—Whether these facts taken together cannot be utilised to effect a damaging breach in the position of the adversaries who are opposing your work of agitation and education. The existing status of silver under English law certainly impugns the dignity and impeccability of those to whom the so-called “gold standard” is a fetish, to whom prejudice against silver is a religion, and it nullifies the supposed complete committal of Parliament against silver money, a belief in which arrays all conservative instincts against your reform. And, if I am right, *it is this self-satisfied and unconvertible conservatism in some, which stiffens the will of many to resist the approach of persuasion.* And you observe this is precisely the “feeling” which you wish to mollify and transform.

SUPPOSED CASE OF A MINISTRY FRIENDLY TO YOUR CAUSE.

In order to ascertain whether these views of mine are fully justified it may be worth while to entertain for a moment the supposition that a Ministry friendly to your cause had offered in 1878 or in 1881, that if other Nations would restore free coinage they would use their powers under existing law to promote the acceptance of silver money in England as her quota in the new Union. We will inquire what would have been the result.

Mark, I pray you, I am not inquiring whether that was what the United States or France wanted of England, that is to say, all they wanted. Nor do I ask you whether it is what the English pro-silver advocates were proposing. I merely ask what would have happened.

My answer to the question is this. I will not *ex post facto* prophesy that the United States and France would then and there have adopted the ratio and opened their mints to silver. I will say, however, that such an offer from England would have transformed the situation. It

would have led to a preliminary accord between nations. If it did not at once set on foot measures competent to equalise the metals, it would have hastened such measures by many years. In any case it would have given you a leverage to bring the United Kingdom to the place you wanted it to occupy. It would have put the whole cause "on the inclined plane," and saved the years in which the Statute of Limitations has been running against concord, especially on the crucial question of the ratio to be adopted.

COMPLEXITY OF PROCEDURE IN REFERENCE TO A COINAGE UNION.

I wish further to explain that these observations seem to me the more pertinent because of the peculiar make-up of that political entity which we know as a nation or a Government. There is a division of organs, and interdependence of parts, in the make-up of a Government, which fix the practical bearings of any scheme of procedure. I can show just what I mean by a brief analysis of the actualities that are before you in England, at least as I see them. If I am wrong I shall be glad to have made the opportunity of receiving correction. For this analysis I will take as my guide the very blunt and practical query—

WHAT IS IT YOU WANT?

You want the Executive Governments of the chief Powers to promote a treaty and make it, and you want the legislatures of those Powers, as far as the constitutions of the respective countries make it necessary, to pass statutes for free coinage of silver and gold at one ratio with equal legal tender rights.

You want the United Kingdom to bring it to pass that this consentient action shall proceed.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE AT WESTMINSTER?

Among the various things which you wish Parliament to do there are :—

1. Things which are directly effected by statute ; as, for example,—

Legal tender of silver coin.

Legal weight of silver coin, &c.

Rules for the Mint, &c.

Legal rights of depositors of bullion, &c.

2. Things which are remitted by the statute to secondary agencies :—

(a) To the Ministry :

Royal proclamations ;

Representation on the part of the United Kingdom to foreign Governments ;

Detailed regulations of the Treasury.

(b.) To the Bank of England :

Its acceptance of silver coins, bullion, &c..

(c.) To the Mint.

3. Matters which are committed by the statute to the discretion of secondary agencies, which may be :—

(a.) Ministry.

(b.) Bank of England.

(c.) Royal Mint.

This will serve as a framework of what you would expect to be done at Westminster if you had a majority, and if you were drafting an Act which you were expecting to pass.

This, then, is what you want at Westminster.

But you are not as “far along” as this ; you have no Bill before Parliament.

WHAT WAS ASKED OF THE MINISTRY.

I now return to the deputation of May 30th.

You did not ask them to propose your ideal measure to Parliament. You asked them,—I again quote from pages 3 and 22 of the pamphlet report issued by the League,—or

rather you urged upon them the "importance of consulting the chief commercial nations as to their readiness to join with the United Kingdom in a conference for the purpose of considering whether, and how far, a bimetallic system can be established by international agreement." The request was refused by the Ministry—I mean so far of course as practical action was concerned. There was no unwillingness on their part to consider the importance of the question generally, without limiting the "importance" to their asking a specific question of other nations. The refusal seems to have been based upon the ground—

- (1.) That they were unprepared to act without authority from Parliament, and
- (2.) They were unprepared to take the responsibility of asking authority from Parliament.

Of course that incident is closed, and there is no object in making any reference to it except for the purpose of getting instruction out of the examination. As for your formulating new demands in the future I should not venture to have, still less to express, a specific opinion without a good deal more information than I now have. What I say in the next pages, therefore, is tentative to me, as well as a suggestion for you; meant in fact to assist as far as may be, in threshing out in advance the questions that will arise when the time comes for the formulating of new demands. But, speaking generally, it is the part of wisdom to know what you want; it is a little counterpart of the great Socratic maxim which still endures as the quintessence of wisdom both as to terrestrial life and as to matters of the soul—"know thyself."

WHAT COULD A FRIENDLY MINISTRY DO?

So I shall propose to you to consider what it is a Ministry could do to promote your cause—but independently of bringing in a Bill and passing it in Parliament.

We will assume for a moment, then, that there is a Ministry in power which is entirely in accord with your ideas, takes an earnest and most intelligent interest in the problem how to get into harness this baulky team of nations, which with less than four-in-hand cannot pull the load, and needs far more than that to pull it easily, but a Ministry which, at the same time, holds its sentiment at a moderate temperature, so to speak; that is to say, it is ready to do all it can within the limits of its proper functions *vis-a-vis* to Parliament to promote your cause, but while it is ready to do all sorts of things within its power, which your enemies in Parliament would criticise and object to, still it is not ready to provoke opposition which would endanger its tenure, or make silver a Cabinet issue with Parliament.

What can it do to promote the cause?

Two lines of action are open:

1. Abroad, it can encourage other countries to come forward.
2. At home, it can contribute to the conversion of your opponents in England.

With reference to foreign countries such a Ministry could do three things:

- (a.) It could foster action on their part.
- (b.) It could assist them, or encourage them rather, to *push England diplomatically*.
- (c.) It could make home arrangements for restoration of silver money in England, either immediately or as a condition and quota of co-operation, in which other nations should be asked to join.

Here again I offer a framework or schedule to be filled out. If it be open to correction I shall be indebted for the information.

WHAT MINISTRIES HAVE DONE.

I now turn to facts.

Should a Ministry now be expected to do any less than Lord Beaconsfield's Ministry did in 1878? No.

Can they be expected to do any less than Mr. Gladstone's Ministry did in 1881? Surely not!

Would they do any less than Mr. Balfour has done, while in the Cabinet, in holding and expressing opinions in accord with yours? Evidently not!

WHAT A MINISTRY MIGHT DO.

It is evident, then, that our supposed friendly Ministry is authorised by precedent to be outspoken both abroad and at home about what ought to be done. I repeat that taking actual precedent as a base of operations for the supposition we are inquiring into, there would come from such a Ministry an avowal of opinion, based upon familiarity with the subject-matter. Such an avowal of the convictions of a Ministry would act as an irrepressible solvent upon public opinion. The present boycott of the London Press would be broken, there would be speaking on your side which the public would insist upon hearing. Moreover, the prospect of a settlement would be so good—it would be so evident that all ground had passed away for the “silver scare”—that the gold price of silver would be assisted upward, and, with the help of enlarged mintage in various countries, it would be brought near the old ratios.

What would such a Ministry be willing, if not to say to foreign Powers, at least *to allow them to understand?*

Suppose that the following were the substance of what was understood:—

“We are authorised by statute to establish free coinage of silver dollars after the standard of Queen Elizabeth minus a modern seigniorage which puts them at 14·28 to 1 in weight when coined, but at 15·21 to 1 for the depositor. The ratio is an obstacle to free coinage, unless other Powers adopt it, but we can coin on Government account as we

please. These dollars would not be legal tender, but we can take care of them. It is a crude measure to offer, but it is the best we have in stock, without going to Parliament, and we are not ready to do that. It counts for something, certainly, as an addition to the measures held in view in the Conference of 1881. If foreign Powers are really in earnest in thinking that the restoration of silver is a good thing, and are unwilling to establish parity between the metals without our help, they might do worse than accept what we have got."

You see that is a sort of proposition which foreign nations could not consistently afford to neglect. Of course this is merely a supposition. And beside this there are two assumptions in that supposition which I may as well mention.

I assume, as before mentioned, that my discovery of the present state of the law is correct, and, second, that it is conceivable a Ministry could feel justified in taking up an unused right as warrant for action without going to Parliament. As to the first assumption of course it would be a matter of great interest to me to hear the question discussed by a constitutional lawyer, and it would lighten the subject to have it so discussed. As to the second assumption, I should present to anyone considering it seriously the remark that this is not a case of prerogative, it is a case of a Ministerial act provided for by statute. I should further observe that public sentiment would have a good deal to do in disposing such a Ministry, as I am imagining to be in charge of your cause, to adopt a measure which their opponents would regard as a straining of the authority of the Crown. So far as the English dollar is concerned, and the conundrum which I am sorry to trouble you with (if it troubles you) about the effect of free coinage at 15.21 to the depositor with 6 per cent. taken out of the coin and put into the Treasury, it is plain that it could not be, as a sacrifice or concession, in any sense a

burden when compared with the benefits which the parity of silver and gold, established by concurrent coinage in other nations, would bring to the Empire.

And now, having brought you thus far, I venture to inquire whether this *close inspection of practical situations does not help to make things clear, to define the situation you want to deal with?*

WHAT YOU REALLY WANT OF THE MINISTRY.

We have at any rate gone thus far, that if the Ministry had done what you asked them to do, they would have had to do a great deal more, that you did not ask them to do.

What I am now concerned in is the latter, for that is what you really want most—what you did not ask. What quota of co-operation in the restoration of silver can the present Ministry offer to Foreign Governments (beyond those of 1881) short of getting Parliament to pass an amendment of the Coinage Act of 1870? Of course, you want whatever they can do. What can they do?

- (1.) They can be *entirely* in sympathy with your cause and say so.

But that is not action. It is an aid and promise of action, and as such of the highest importance. If you could induce the Ministry to say that it was *well worth while to have the moneys of different parts of an Empire at par*, your cause would make an enormous stride forward—that is, with proper advertisement of this conversion of the Ministry!

But it would be only moral support—not a quota of action at once.

- (2.) They can offer to coin the English silver dollar double florin, in large quantities, or offer free coinage at 15·21 to 1, provided other nations can arrange for that ratio.

Taking the first alternative as the practical one, to which no serious objection is likely to lie—I ask you, is the

really anything else they can offer, in the way of a quota of co-operation ?

I must say very frankly, if there is anything I should like to know it, for the question may be asked me and I want to be able to answer it correctly.

It seems to me, then, that what you really want, that is practicable—without Parliament—is to induce the Ministers individually to perform the operation vulgarly known as “getting off the fence on your side” ; and further, in action, that they make up their minds to add to the projected quota of 1881 (in the concurrent restoration of silver) the mintage of so and so many millions of English dollars, and let their decision be known.

Upon the question whether and how you shall formulate or push home these very practical demands, I shall not presume to express an opinion.

Referring again to the request of May 30th, that the Ministry should consult Foreign Governments, &c., I wish to note with the fullest appreciation what a gain it would be to get your Government face to face with Foreign Governments, as the action you proposed would have placed it—in a place, in fact, where it must go ahead, and push for Parliamentary authorisation, if not, indeed propose a modification of the Coinage Act of 1870.

In this connexion I ask you to observe that the modification to be proposed would be only a very slight modification, seeing that free coinage of silver is “the law” already—that is, unless I am mistaken. I should imagine it might lighten the labours of Members of Parliament on this subject when the tug of war comes—to find that free coinage is already provided for.

THE REPLY OF THE MINISTERS TO YOUR DEPUTATION.

I return again to the reply of the Ministry to the deputation.

The asking of the question to foreign Governments, which you suggested, was taken by the Prime Minister to be, in the present state of opinion, an act so far engaging the Crown in a course of action favourable to restoration of Silver that the impulse to this action should come from Parliament. It further appeared that in the present state of public opinion the Ministry are not prepared to attempt to impose their views—which are not divulged—upon Parliament.

So far as England is concerned, then, we may say that the impression is conveyed that “you are not strong enough in the constituencies, and you are not strong enough in Parliament to warrant us in coming forward as your leaders either abroad or at home.”

THE REFERENCE TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

Another branch of the answer of Lord Salisbury refers to foreign countries. The suggestion is made that they have to be persuaded too, as well as the English public and a majority in Parliament.

Now the conflict between your statement of fact, that is to say the prospectus or circular statement of the Bimetallic League, and the statement of the position of the Ministry about the attitude of foreign countries, is a direct conflict on the vital question of the whole business.

Your circular avers—

“There is every encouragement to press the matter seeing that the United States of America, France, Germany, and Holland are willing and eager to co-operate.”

There seems to be a challenge here. Of course Lord Salisbury’s opinion of itself has great importance, simply because it is his opinion. The challenge I refer to has reference to the facts whether confidence in the attitude of other nations is warranted, as you say it is.

I dwell upon it because to practical men who are not interested in your cause such a view as that puts an air of the visionary upon your movement. It operates distinctly as a challenge to you. Lord Salisbury's remarks upon your position have a hearing in the public which essays in favour of silver are not likely to receive or enjoy. What Lord Salisbury says is practical, concise, and pointed—pointed very sharply. If you make no reply to this sort of thing you leave your cause at a disadvantage before a part of your public.

So, when you come to questions of precedence, it seems to me that the points that need attention are just such practical points as these, and for the purpose of reply you want to be as incisive as possible. I mean this of course without a breath of suggestion of forgetting any obligations of reticence or consideration in referring to a Minister.

THE SILVER RE-UNION at the FRENCH EXHIBITION.

So far as the League is concerned, the drift of Lord Salisbury's reference to the *Congrès Monétaire de l'Exposition* is sufficiently obvious to dispense me from discussion of it. It is a challenge to the League to muster their forces and show what they are made of.

So far as Foreign Countries are concerned there is a hint in Lord Salisbury's *hope* that "the meeting may be made international," which friends of Silver Union will do well to act upon. At the same time the remark is necessarily made that it is Lord Salisbury himself who can make the anonymous "Congress," of which he speaks so fully, not only international but diplomatic and official if he likes. In that case it would become a Conference, or rather it would be followed by a Conference. Indeed, if plenipotentiaries were sent, as would be the case if Mr. Windom were to meet Mr. Goschen and Mr. Rouvier, it would be a real Congress.

THE DIGNITY OF YOUR POSITION AND THE NEED OF
REVEALING IT.

I now pass to a matter of detail which I venture to believe is well worthy of your consideration, whether with reference to what you will say or do in Paris—of course not without a shrewd perception of the blows which the Paris despatches to the London papers may be able to strike for your cause—or with reference to further education and agitation in England. I refer to Lord Salisbury's statement about your cause, and your opponents; to what he said about the "animosity and difference" developed in reference to these questions of Silver and Gold, and especially to the impression to which his speech gives vogue, that a party exists which "has a remedy" which is to make the "whole world monometallic."

Now these remarks, for which we are indebted—I do not use the word ironically—for which we are indebted to the wit and cogency of statement for which Lord Salisbury is famous, are well calculated to fasten themselves upon the attention, and *hence they give you a leverage to press home certain truths* which you hold to be vital.

Do I need to remind you of the incompleteness of these remarks as a statement of the existing position of things? They are good raillery. Coming from a Minister to a body of reformers they are very telling, especially as the Minister has the last word. But in matter of correctness they leave something to be desired; as it is natural they should. It is your business and not Lord Salisbury's, to make an advantageous statement of your case.

This "animosity and difference" he speaks of is merely evidence of the importance of the reform you advocate, and of the obstinacy of the prejudice you seek to uproot. The doctors whose medicine created a grievous malady are hot in self-defence, and you, not being allowed (by Lord Salisbury and others in power) to save the patient from further malpractice, are indignant and earnest in

your statements. The difference is not between rivals in a race, but partakes of the earnestness of politics. Here of course it is just to remark that the heat developed with reference to it is frigidity compared with the Irish question, and whatever caloric arises in connection with it is most natural, for it is not the fact (as Lord Salisbury implies) that an issue must be either "*strictly* political" or "*strictly* theological" to justify heat; a case both of politics and theology is entitled to double heat, and the *odium theologicum* of the monetary politicians who are holding the fort against reform is quite up to convent pitch.

Besides, this animosity and difference is a local affair for England, whatever its degree of intensity. Your first League began its work in 1881, when the settlement of the world's money was left at England's door.

THE CHARACTER OF YOUR OPPONENTS AS MERE DISUNIONISTS.

As for this supposed party opposed to you who "have another remedy" which is to "make the whole world monometallic," where is this party? I am not aware that it exists: I don't believe its existence can be shown.

Indeed, I am inclined to think that the idea of such a party is a product of the verbal antithesis which acquires actuality for people who use those mouthfuls of abstraction "bimetallism" and "monometallism," and are confused by them, as most people are who use them. What with the sun and moon, and the two sexes, and right and left, fore and hind, inside and outside, top and bottom, we live in such an atmosphere of duality, that it always seems natural things should go in pairs. Every Jack must have his Jill, and so if there is a "bimetallism" there must be a "monometallism" to be the opposite of it.

But that is not in fact the case! These "monometallists" of Lord Salisbury's remind me of the French

Foreign Minister's "Kroumirs." France, you will remember, interfered to protect her most deserving colonists in Tunis and thereabouts against those fiends in human shape, the Kroumirs. Yet, as the French troops pushed forward toward the land of mirage they failed to find them. In fact there were no such fiends. Still, France holds Tunis! My suggestion to the Bimetallic League is, not to allow Lord Salisbury's protectorate to profit by an imaginary reality.

The opposition to your movement are Disunionists. Disparity and fluctuation arising from a conflict of laws, for which they and their theories are responsible, are the *status quo* in which they are in power, and they like to stay in power. If parity, or concord of laws, were established, their reputations would suffer. Hence they are Disunionists.

THE PROPRIETY OF A CERTAIN AGGRESSIVENESS.

Now these are the facts as I see them, and they are the main facts. Do you not agree with me? If you do, I ask you ought not these facts to be known? I further suggest to you the inquiry, What tactics on the part of reformers are necessary to make it impossible for such a burlesque to have vogue as this characterisation of them as being merely the equal of their opponents?

Of course you will understand when I speak of laying bare the peculiar position of things in England to the public, I am assuming things are said by the League, and not by individuals in official or political life. The League can speak plainly: it is a voice and only a voice. Its object is not to *faire la politique*, as the French say, but merely to teach, to be heard and have its meaning understood. It can call a spade a spade without discourtesy or breach of any *convenance* whatever.

THE REPRESENTATION OF THE LEAGUE AT THE COMING CONGRESS OF THE EXPOSITION. (SEPT. 11-14.)

No doubt it is easy to lose sight of the radical distinction between the official and the private citizen; and it is to this perhaps that some misapprehensions are due, touching the appearance of Englishmen at this Congress.

The copy of the Regulations which you remember seeing some time ago (July 19th) also contains evidence of the difference in the stages of official participation.

Persons accredited by their Governments to observe the proceedings are members of the Congress. In this way there is a half-implied invitation from the officers of the Congress to foreign Governments. The representatives of foreign Governments at the Exposition have also been requested to designate persons to be sent to each of the 69 "Congresses" of the Exposition. But the French Government has not asked other Governments, nor has it announced its interest or policy.

The "Congress" is free to all men, and it offers itself to the League as an instrumentality or occasion for brilliant work of propaganda.

WHAT IS WANTED THEN FROM THE LEAGUE?

The sound of a trumpet!

Is your cause a good one? If it is, now is the time to say so!

Even if the Governments object to assisting to celebrate the taking of the Bastille, why should the cause of monetary reform be compelled to suffer?

I have been greatly surprised to hear that your Executive Sub-Committee has seemed to regard the matter as unimportant.

Lord Salisbury hopes this reunion "may be made international"; he tells you so; and certainly it is in

your power to help make it international, though it is not in your power—*but in his*—to make it inter-governmental.

Considering the opportunity, it is a pity you cannot use fasting and prayer as a preparation for the inquiry, what Lord Beaconsfield, if he were here, would have advised you to say. But with this reservation touching the language used, the thing to be done is—at least, so it looks to me—quite simple. You do not want speeches nor science, you want a manifesto, which falls as naturally from a reform league as lightning from a cloud. I should say it needs merely to contain a confession of faith and an account of your propaganda, both of them brief and as practical as possible.

This letter shows you what my view is of the practical situation. The project of solidifying the basis of the world's valuations by an accord of the chief Powers was left at England's door in 1881. Your League was founded then to win the assent of British opinion to the United Kingdom's entering the alliance proposed in the Conferences, with her full quota of co-operation. The obstacles you had to contend with were such and such; and your success has been such and such.

You propose to carry on the work—to fight it out on that line. As for your opponents, your advance is the destruction of their main argument.

On this head allow me to offer you an extract from an address I lately sent to a learned body.

THE DIS-UNIONIST OR ANTI-FEDERALIST POSITION.

Those who oppose the growth of opinion in favour of federation may be conveniently classified as follows :—

First Grouping.

Those who have learned only a part of the truths hitherto set forth.

Those who have refused to learn any of these truths.

Second Grouping.

Those who think the federation project will never be adopted, chiefly because of the expected continuance of England's refusal to co-operate.

Those who think the federation would not maintain parity between the two metals even if England were to co-operate with free coinage of an English silver dollar.

You will observe that for all, except those who refuse to learn *anything*, the opposition of England to *political* adhesion to your cause is the stronghold of *doctrinal* opposition to it. Your reform movement is thus weakening all adversaries at the same time.

A clarion note, an electric appeal from you—who are bearing the burden of the fight—can be made to be heard the earth around.

“One touch of nature makes the whole world kin!”

It can win friends for your cause in every country, and mightily strengthen you at home.

TO ANONYMOUS J. BLANK, ESQ., FROM AMICUS CURIAE.

London, August 1889.
